

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1-15 (Canceled).

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): An optical communication network comprising:
at least two independent sub-networks, which are not connected directly to each other with optical fiber links, each of the sub-networks including a plurality of communication nodes, each of the communication nodes being provided with a function of transmitting and receiving optical signals;

a backbone network configured to connect the sub-networks;

a first communication path, which is through the backbone network, for connecting a first communication node and a second communication node, the first communication node being included in one of the sub-networks and the second communication node being included in another one of the sub-networks; and

a second communication path, which is an optical space transmission path, for connecting the first communication node and the second communication node.

~~at least two sub-networks each including a plurality of communication nodes each provided with a function of transmitting and receiving optical signals, which have no direct optical fiber links among the sub-networks, and a backbone network connecting the sub-networks, the optical communication network further comprising:~~

~~a first communication path through the backbone network, and a second communication path that is an optical space transmission path, between a first communication node included in one of the sub-networks and a second communication node included in another one of the sub-networks.~~

Claim 17 (Original): The optical communication network as claimed in claim 16,
wherein:

at least one of the first communication node and the second communication node has
a path switching part for switching selectively between the first communication path and the
second communication path.

Claim 18 (Original): The optical communication network as claimed in claim 17,
wherein:

the path switching part selectively switches between the first communication path and
the second communication path according to an amount of communication traffic in the first
communication path.

Claim 19 (Original): The optical communication network as claimed in claim 18,
wherein:

at least one of the first communication node and the second communication node
comprise a beam size controlling part for varying a degree of spread of the optical beam
emitted on the optical space transmission path that is the second communication path
according to a predetermined condition.

Claim 20 (Original): The optical communication network as claimed in claim 19,
wherein:

the beam size controlling part varies the degree of spread of the optical beam
according to conditions defined on the basis of a state of the space transmission path.

Claim 21 (Original): The optical communication network as claimed in claim 20,
wherein:

the beam size controlling part varies the degree of spread of the optical beam
according to a condition that at the receiving node that is either of the first communication
node or the second communication node the received level of the optical beam depending on
the state of the space propagation path is constant.

Claims 22-25 (Canceled).